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# PARISH COUNCILS AND VILLAGE LIFE.

A REVISED EDITION OF

“FIVE YEARS’ FRUITS OF THE PARISH COUNCILS ACT.”

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# A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

BY

**Dr. W. HASBACH,**

*Professor of Political Economy in the University of Kiel.*

In view of the widespread interest which is now being taken in the land question, considerable importance attaches to this publication. The author traces in historical order the development of the class of agricultural labourer as it exists at the present day. The book is historical and not controversial, though the whole impression left by it is of the evil results of the development of an agricultural proletariat and of the comparative novelty of such phenomenon. The work, which was originally published in Germany, has been brought right up to date and translated into English by Miss Ruth Kenyon.

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# PARISH COUNCILS AND VILLAGE LIFE.

SINCE 1894 every rural parish containing more than 300 inhabitants has had a parish council to manage its local affairs. These councils are elected once every three years. There will be elections in March or April, 1910, 1913, 1916, etc. If there is not a good parish council in any parish, the electors should take care to get a good one at the next election.\*

## What use is the Parish Council?

Many people are saying that the parish councils are of no use to the parishes, and that they have done nothing for the poor man. It is quite true that in most places the parish councils have not done much. In many villages they have done nothing at all. But where they have done nothing at all, it is largely because the wrong men have been elected. In most parishes the farmers and shopkeepers and innkeepers do not like the parish council, because they are afraid of having to pay higher rates, and very few of the squires and parsons believe in it or care much about it.†

These people go about saying that parish councils are of no use at all to anybody. Unfortunately, many laborers and other simple folk believe this. They hoped much from the parish councils, and they have got little or nothing. But it is not true that parish councils are of no use to the poor man. They have taken the power over the village affairs out of the hands of individuals or cliques, and taught the laborer that his vote is as good as that of anyone else. In hundreds of different parishes up and down England and Wales the parish councils have done a great deal of good. They have got allotments and small holdings of grazing or gardening land for men who wanted them; they have protected the poor man's common or village green, and often obtained additional land for common pasture; they have appointed their own men to manage the village charities, and have sometimes restored to the poor charity money which had formerly been misapplied; they have seen to it that the charities should go to those who really needed them, whatever political or religious opinions they might hold; they have got better drinking water for the cottages, digging new wells and putting up new pumps where required; they have

\* For a plain statement of the law about parish councils, exact particulars as to who can vote and who can be elected, and full explanation about the method of election, see Fabian Tract No. 62, "Parish and District Councils: what they are and what they can do." 1d. It will be posted to any person sending 1½d. in stamps to the Secretary, Fabian Society, 3 Clement's Inn, Strand, London, W.C.

† For this reason no proper report has been published by the Government, as was its plain duty, showing what the parish councils have done. The facts in this Tract have been gathered from more than a hundred separate reports obtained by the Fabian Society from parishes all over the country; from the printed reports and proceedings of county and rural district councils; and from various Parliamentary papers.

cleaned out filthy ponds and ditches, and done away with nuisances which were injuring the health of the village; they have maintained and repaired the footpaths, and prevented the stopping up of public rights of way; they have looked after the rates and taxes and sometimes saved the parish large sums of money by preventing dishonest officers stealing the cash or dealing unfairly with the assessments; they have put up lamps to light the village streets at night; they have procured fire engines to put out fires; they have provided open bathing places and sometimes regular baths for men and women; they have laid out playgrounds for the children, cricket fields for the young men, and pleasant walks among trees, with seats for the weary; they have erected parish halls where needed; and they have sometimes set going libraries and reading rooms for the free use of the parish. All this, and much more, has been done by the parish councils in those parishes in which the right men have been elected. This Tract is written to tell of their success. What these parishes have done, others can do.

### Allotments and Small Holdings.

The Act of 1907 having at the time of writing (February, 1908), only been in force for a few weeks it is impossible to record any results from it, but it has already created a great movement in many parts of the country and thousands of acres of land have been applied for. Associations of intending small holders have been formed in many districts, such as the Land Clubs of East Surrey and West Kent, federated in the Land Club Union, particulars of which can be obtained of Montague Fordham, Honorary Organizing Secretary, Pains Hill, Limpsfield, Surrey. The Co-operative Small Holdings Association, of 10 Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C., can supply lecturers and other information as to what is being done and how to get small holdings and allotments.\*

A considerable proportion of the 7,000 parish councils in existence have got land for allotments, amounting altogether to something like 17,000 acres. Most of this was acquired in the first three years after the passing of the Act of 1894; but since 1897 there has been a steady, though slower, progress in this direction. In the five years from 1897 to 1902, 219 parish councils acquired 2,580 acres for allotments, accommodating nearly 6,000 tenants; whilst five parish meetings acquired 45 acres for 77 tenants.†

In Norfolk more than 100 parishes, in Devon and in Lincolnshire more than 80, have now their own allotments under the parish council. What no one laborer could do for himself, the parish council was able to do for them all. Usually the parish council succeeded in getting enough land by agreement with the landlord, which is much the best way for all parties. Sometimes the landowners or parsons have shown themselves willing to help the parish.

\* See Fabian Tract No. 134, "Small Holdings, Allotments, and Common Pastures: and how to get them"; six for 1d.

† It is not yet possible to give any summarized figures for the years since 1902 because the official return, which is the only possible source of such figures, appears at somewhat rare intervals.

council, as, for example, at Shepton Beauchamp (Somerset) and at Eaglescliffe (Durham), where the good offices of the rector smoothed the way to the acquisition of some 28 acres of excellent grass land for the laborers of the village. An admirable instance of energy is afforded by the Parish Council of Belbroughton (Worcestershire). This is a village inhabited mainly by nailmakers, who, in consequence of the rapid increase of machinery, found their old industry of nailmaking by hand could no longer provide them with even the bare living wage that they had been used to make. In 1895 the parish council took a field of 18 acres and accommodated 30 nailers. The next year 16 acres were added ; the year after, 109 acres ; and, in 1903, a further 34 acres. These 177 acres enable 112 men to obtain a livelihood as market gardeners. No less than 26 horses are employed in ploughing, carting, and carrying the produce to Birmingham and bringing back manure for the land. All this, it is worthy of remark, has been done despite the lethargy of the rural district council and the continued opposition of the chief landowner. In many cases where a landlord's obstinacy has produced a deadlock, the law has been set in motion, and he has been forced to part with some of his land to the parish.\*

Here are the names of some parishes where an order has been obtained compelling the landlords to let the laborers have land :—

|                                     | Pop.  |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Asfordby (Leicestershire) ... ..    | 1,062 |
| Ashby (Lincolnshire) ... ..         | 1,845 |
| Beaghall (Yorkshire) ... ..         | 396   |
| Dunsford (Devon) ... ..             | 633   |
| East Rusten (Norfolk) ... ..        | 603   |
| Fosdyke (Lincolnshire) ... ..       | 436   |
| Gamlingay (Cambs.) ... ..           | 1,722 |
| Garthorpe (Lincolnshire) ... ..     | 481   |
| Goxhill (Lincolnshire) ... ..       | 1,174 |
| Holt (Dorset) ... ..                | 820   |
| Kexby (Lincolnshire) ... ..         | 300   |
| Llandyfriog (Cardiganshire) ... ..  | 748   |
| Potter Heigham (Norfolk) ... ..     | 426   |
| Preston (Dorset) ... ..             | 664   |
| Tarvin (Cheshire) ... ..            | 1,093 |
| Tydd St. Mary (Lincolnshire) ... .. | 821   |
| West Shutford (Oxfordshire) ... ..  | 271   |

\* If a parish council cannot get suitable land by agreement and on reasonable terms, it should lay the case before the county council, who will then draft an order authorizing the compulsory hiring for a period of not less than 14, and not more than 35, years of such land in or near the parish as is specified in the order. This order will have to be confirmed by the Board of Agriculture. (The Board of Agriculture is now substituted for the Local Government Board, which was formerly the authority for carrying out this business.) If there is any opposition on behalf of the landowners concerned, or of any person interested, a local inquiry will be held, so that the Board of Agriculture may be satisfied before it confirms the order. If there is no opposition, the confirmation must be made as a matter of course. The Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, Whitehall, London, will answer any inquiries on the subject and give all necessary information.

Nearly all the land has been hired by the parish council at as low a rent as it could arrange, and let out to the allotment holders at a rent per pole or per rood just covering all the expenses.

Several parishes have had allotment land purchased for them either by the county council or the rural district council, the parish council in each case having the management. Thus Wigloft, in Lincolnshire, now has six acres, bought for it by the Holland County Council for £900, and paid for by a loan spread over 50 years. The parish council lets the land to 12 tenants, whose rent pays the interest and sinking fund. At the end of 50 years, the parish council will own the land free of any charge. The Parish Council of Keresley got the Warwickshire County Council to purchase 11½ acres in the parish, which the parish council now hires from the county council, and sublets to 18 tenants.

Most of this land is used for allotment gardens, varying in size from a few square yards up to an acre. But in many cases pasture land is let in larger holdings. Thus the Parish Council of Longcott, in Berkshire, has hired 10 acres of meadow which it sublets to four tenants; Shrivenham, in Berkshire, 20½ acres of pasture to three tenants; Weedon, in Buckinghamshire, 16 acres of pasture to one tenant; Clifford, in Herefordshire, four and three quarter acres to one tenant; Glen Magna, in Leicestershire, six acres of pasture to one tenant; Colyton, in Devonshire, 19 acres to three tenants; Witton Gilbert, in Durham, 32 acres to six tenants; Rothbury, in Northumberland, 46 acres to five tenants; and the Trefdraeth Parish Council, in Anglesey (pop. 682) has hired no less than 172 acres, which it has let to eleven tenants, one having about 100 acres.

Although only a portion of the total number of parishes has yet put the law as to allotments in force, more than 30,000 working men now hold land directly from their parish councils.

In many other parishes the parish council has been able, without itself hiring or purchasing land, to induce the landlords to set aside land for allotments. Thus in the parishes of Axmouth, Clawton, and Pyworthy, in Devonshire, the parish councils received applications for allotments, and successfully appealed to the landowners on behalf of the applicants. This happened also at Dunston, in Lincolnshire, Harthill-with-Woodall (Yorkshire), and many other places. The Slimbridge Parish Council (Gloucestershire) got two acres of charity land divided into allotments. Twyford Parish Council (Hampshire) owns two acres of land under an Enclosure Award, and lets this out in allotments. The Cold Ash Parish Council (Berkshire), which similarly owns eight acres let in allotments, reduced the rents to the lowest possible point, and improved the plots by providing new gates and fences. At Nayland-with-Wissington (Suffolk) the parish council got the rents of the existing allotments reduced. The Parish Council of St. Bride's Major (Glamorganshire, pop. 686) borrowed £400, on a 15 years term, in order to provide fences for its allotments on Ogmores Down.

When a parish council has obtained land for allotments, it is very useful to have definite regulations to prevent any abuse. Several

hundreds of parish councils have made such "Regulations for Allotments," and got them confirmed by the Local Government Board,\* in London, so that each allotment holder may be protected from annoyance and the parish property from misuse.†

### Common Pasture and Grazing Grounds.

A few parish councils have provided common pasture and grazing grounds for their villages. Thus at Soulbury (Bucks.), the parish council rents 21 acres for this purpose; at Hasland (Derbyshire), seven acres. In Yorkshire, the Ashton-cum-Aughton Parish Council rents eight acres; that of Kilham, 21 acres; and that of Beeford, 48 acres—all for the poor man's cow, the cottager's goose, and the horse or donkey of the small dealer or craftsman. And now, by the new Small Holdings Act, wherever allotments are provided and it is thought desirable to attach grazing ground to them, land may be acquired for that purpose.

### Cottages.

A parish council cannot build cottages apart from allotments; but it can, without permission from anyone, appoint a committee of inquiry to report on the state of the housing in the parish, and print its report. If this committee reports that the cottages are ill-drained, unwholesome, and unfit to live in, and that new cottages ought to be built to supply the needs of the villagers, then the parish council should pass a resolution calling on the rural district council to build new cottages. If the rural district council neglects or refuses to comply with this request, the parish council can appeal to the county council, which, when satisfied that the need for new cottages exists, can order the cottages to be erected.

[A Rural Housing Bill is promised by the Government, which may alter all this, but at the time of writing (February, 1908) its provisions are unknown.]

Some parish councils have got cottages repaired by complaining to the district or county council. The Parish Council of Suffield (Norfolk, pop. 207) found that the parish contained some cottages which were in very bad repair. It borrowed £100 on a 12 years term, put them in good order, and let them at satisfactory rentals.

The parish of Ixworth (Suffolk, population 856) was the first to get cottages actually built for it by the rural sanitary authority. After many complaints and repeated inquiries, the Thingoe Rural District Council bought four acres of land for £160, and built eight cottages for £1,370, borrowing the money from the Public Works Loan Commissioners at three and a quarter per cent., repayable by instalments extending over 30 years. The cottages are let at £5 10s. each a year, and the surplus land at twopence per rod. This, however, was done in 1890-1893, before parish councils existed. The first case of a parish council building cottages was that of Pens-

\* These regulations will now be confirmed by the Board of Agriculture, the Secretary to which will furnish inquirers with all necessary information.

† See also below (p. 9) as to power of parish council to build cottages on allotments.

hurst (Kent, pop. 1,678), and this was due to the energy of a lady councillor (Miss Jane Escombe). Beginning in 1895, it was not until 1897 that she managed to get a county council inquiry; and it took over two years more to get over all the official and other difficulties. But in November, 1899, a site of three-quarters of an acre was purchased from the clergyman for £130; and twelve months later the cottages, six in number (with six rooms each), were completed at a cost of £501 for each pair, covered by a loan of £1,800 at three and a half per cent., repayable in 40 years. At five shillings per week the receipts amount to £78, and the annual charge for interest and repayment is £74 9s. 6d.

Eight more cottages have since been built on leasehold land at a cost of £1,850, and are let at rents from four shillings to 4s. 9d. per week. The loan is repayable in 40 years, and the rate of interest is three and a half per cent.

Bradwell (Maldon R. D. C., Essex). Six cottages have been built, at a total cost of £1,450 inclusive, on an acre of land costing £45. There are on the ground floor parlor, living room, and kitchen eight feet high; and on the first floor three bedrooms eight feet six inches high. They are let at 3s. 6d. each per week. The loans were £1,250 at three and three quarters per cent., and £200 at four and a quarter per cent.

Bratton (Westbury, Wilts). Four houses have been built, at a cost of £887, on land costing £30 for 32 perches (at the rate of £150 per acre), or a whole cost, with architect's fees, etc., of £970. Each house has two rooms and scullery on the ground floor, and three bedrooms on the first floor, and is let at 3s. 6d. per week, tenant paying rates.

Linton (Cambridgeshire). Application was made by this council to the county council on behalf of five parishes in the district, but the others are standing over until Linton has gone through. It is hoped to build for £130 per cottage, then let at 2s. 6d. per week. Land cost £125 for two acres. A loan of £1,500, repayable in 61 years, has been sanctioned by the Local Government Board.

Malpas (Cheshire). A loan of £2,500 was obtained for sixty years, and twelve cottages provided at an estimated annual cost to the rates of £11 per annum on an assessable value of £4,891. Only part of the land has been used, and a rent of four pounds per annum is being derived from the unbuilt portion.

Limpsfield (Surrey, pop. 1,911) is another place which has been very active. In 1901 the parish council found the cottage accommodation in the village to be insufficient and, after very careful inquiry, representations were made to the principal landowner in the matter, with the result that he promised to build immediately twelve additional cottages as an experiment. In 1906 it was found that there was still a scarcity of cottages, and it was proposed that a special report on the matter should be laid before the rural district council. Eventually the parish meeting decided that the work had better be done by voluntary effort, and a building company was formed for the purpose. No difficulty was found in raising the

money, and cottages, which are already begun, will be let at a low rental, paying a small fixed charge by way of interest on the capital outlay.

In Ireland much more has been done than in England. There are now over 15,000 cottages in Irish rural districts, built, owned and let out to tenants by the local public authority.

Lastly, it is important to remember how the Small Holdings Act, 1907, has changed the law as regards building in connection with allotments. Formerly the rural district council could improve and adapt land acquired by it for allotments. Now these powers have not only been transferred to the parish council, but they have been considerably increased by the fact that the parish council is allowed to erect buildings on the allotments which it holds. A parish council may, if it think fit, put up a cottage on any of its allotments which is not less than one acre in extent.

### Recreation Grounds.

Many parish councils have secured useful recreation grounds for their villages. Sometimes these have been given free. At Titchfield (Hampshire) five acres have been given; at Nacton (Suffolk) one acre; at Westbury (Wilts.) half an acre. The parish council of Aldenham (Herts., pop. 2,487) had given it half an acre with gymnastic appliances; and has been offered another four acres for a public park. At Mayfield (Staffs.) the inhabitants themselves presented the parish council with one acre for this purpose. In other villages, land has been let to the parish council at a nominal rent, such as a shilling a year. At Roade (Northamptonshire, pop. 691) the parish council has thus secured a recreation ground of half an acre; at Calverton (Notts.) one of two acres; at Bramcote, in the same county, one of four acres; at Harrow Weald (Middlesex) as much as five-and-three-quarter acres; whilst on the other hand the parish council of St. Margaret-at-Cliffe (Kent), having been given a zigzag footpath up the cliff, has got the use for sixpence a year of sufficient land to put seats on. Less fortunate villages have had to rent land for recreation grounds. The parish council of Aston Tirrold (Berks., pop. 289) hires two acres, whilst that of Twyford (pop. 1,106) in the same county, hires ten acres; Wymondham (Norfolk) is content with half an acre, and Clifton (Lancs.) with three-quarters of an acre, whilst Naseby (Northamptonshire) hires 11 acres. Many parish councils (for instance, that of Great and Little Hampton, Worcestershire) have improved the village greens, so as to make them fit places for the children to play on. The parish council of Barrowden (Rutland) has hired seven acres specifically for a cricket ground; that of Norton-under-Hamdon (Somerset) one-and-a-half acres for a children's playground, whilst Barford Parish Council (Warwickshire) went in for five-and-a-half acres for this purpose. Northolt Parish Council (Middlesex) has got one-and-a-quarter acres of land for a village green at a nominal rent of five shillings a year. Sometimes much larger areas are hired by parish councils for the combined purpose of recreation grounds and common grazing. Thus Aberffraw, in Anglesey, rents by its parish council

16 acres; Whittington, in Worcestershire, 20 acres; Chigwell, in Essex, 49 acres; Pelsall, in Staffordshire, as much as 55 acres.

A few parish councils have purchased land for recreation grounds; thus Chulmleigh (Devon) has bought a little ornamental garden of four poles extent; Horndon-on-the-Hill (Essex) has bought one-and-a-half acres; Forest Row (East Sussex) four acres; Horsepath (Oxfordshire) four acres; Wattisfield (West Suffolk) four-and-three-quarter acres; and Ropley (Hants.) as much as seven acres, part of which it devotes to allotments. In such cases the parish council borrows the money to pay for the land. Thus Burwell (Cambridgeshire) borrowed £346 to buy some recreation ground; Willingham, in the same county, £500; Cuddesdon, in Oxfordshire, £160; Winterslow (Wilts) £250; and Caterham, in Surrey, as much as £2,700—all for recreation grounds. Here again the parish council may make bye-laws, which will be confirmed by the Local Government Board, for the regulation of its recreation ground. In 1905-6 and 1906-7 the Board has confirmed such bye-laws made by various councils—Potten (Bedfordshire), Tiverton (Somerset), Willingham (Cambridgeshire), South Normanton (Derbyshire), Combe Martin (Devon), Aldenham (Herts.), Frensham (Surrey), etc.

### Public Wharf.

At Acle (Norfolk) a small piece of land by the river, forming a sort of wharf, is rented from the lord of the manor, in order that the inhabitants may have the free right to load and unload boats, independently of the riparian owners and occupiers.

### Drying Ground.

At Cummersdale (Cumberland, pop. 615) the inhabitants felt the want of a drying ground, and the parish council rented half an acre of land for common use.

### Burial Grounds.

When the parish churchyard gets full, or is too far off from part of the parish, it is a great convenience for the parish to be able to get a new burial ground. This has been done by nearly 700 parish councils. Occasionally the parish council has been able to get the land for nothing, on proving that it was really needed, as at Steeton-with-Eastburn (West Riding of Yorkshire), where the chairman of the parish council presented the council with one-and-a-half acres. In some cases the land has to be hired on a long lease; the parish council of Brisley (Norfolk) has thus rented half an acre. But nearly always the parish council has bought the freehold, obtaining a loan for the purpose. Sometimes, as at Isleham (Cambridge), all that is obtained is an additional half-acre beside the churchyard. At other times much more is bought; the parish council of Dolwyddelan (pop. 1,112), in Carnarvonshire, has purchased nearly eight acres. In a few cases where the landowner could not be induced to sell the necessary land adjoining or near the churchyard, the parish council prevailed on the rural district council to take it compulsorily.

These purchases are made by means of loans. Thus the Curston Parish Council (Norfolk, pop. 986) borrowed £340 to buy land for a new burial place; the Hauxley Parish Council (Northumberland, pop. 1,627) borrowed £381; and the Rainham Parish Council (Essex, pop. 1,725) borrowed £400. In 1905-6 the Local Government Board sanctioned loans amounting altogether to £7,478, and in 1906-7 £6,765 to parish councils for burial grounds.

### Mortuary.

The Parish Council of Clifton, a mining village in Lancashire (pop. 3,000), by setting aside a stable at the back of the council offices, has provided a mortuary for common use.

### Parish Land Recovered.

Many small pieces of land belonging to the public at large have been "lost" in years gone by for want of anyone to stand up for the public rights. Parish councils have been examining the Enclosure Awards, Tithe Awards, and Lists of Charities for their parishes, and some of this "lost" land has been recovered. For instance, the Askern Parish Council (West Riding of Yorkshire) is now in possession of half an acre of land, including a useful quarry, which had been duly awarded to the parish years ago, but had been quietly usurped by the neighboring landowner. When the village got a parish council to assert the public rights, the present landowner consented to restore the half-acre in question. At Shirland (Derbyshire) the parish council compelled a landowner to disgorge a small strip of land by the high road which he had annexed. The parish council now receives a small annual rent for its use. The Hurley Parish Council (Berkshire) found that the lord of the manor had for years been allowing people, now and then, to enclose bits of the common land, on condition that they paid him a small quit rent. The council complained, and this filching of the public rights has been stopped. At St. Budeaux (Devonshire) the Government had appropriated the village green under some plea or another, but the parish council has now obtained possession of this half-acre, hiring it from the War Office at the nominal rent of a shilling a year. At Pilton (Somerset) the parish council got the lord of the manor to transfer to them free of cost the site of the old parish pound, to be planted with trees and shrubs. At Long Preston (West Riding of Yorkshire) the lord of the manor has transferred the village greens to the parish council free of charge; and at Thundersley (Essex) the same is being done with regard to a large common. Many other village greens, the legal ownership of which has become vested in the lord of the manor, have been let to parish councils at a shilling, or some other nominal rent, so that the people might have a legal right to the use and management of them. By the activity of parish councils many commons and greens have been protected against encroachments and appropriation. Thus at Cellan, in Cardiganshire, the parish council had the common accurately measured, and the public ownership put on record. The Parish Council of Send and Ripley (Surrey, pop.

2,301) has made byelaws regulating the use of its village green and other open spaces. This should be done by every parish council which can prove its title to the green.

The green strips by the side of the high roads are public property, and ought never to be enclosed. In the past many thousands of these pieces of land have been quietly stolen by the neighboring landowners. Now it is the duty of the parish council to watch them, and the duty of the county council to protect them. Many encroachments have been thus stopped. The Parish Council of St. Bride's Major (Glamorgan., pop. 686) successfully fought the Earl of Dunraven, who had tried to make a big encroachment.

### Parish Halls or Rooms.

Many parish councils have acquired or built convenient public rooms for the village to meet in, and offices for the parish business. At Charing (Kent) the parish council bought 10 poles of freehold land and built a hall, getting a loan of £286 for the purpose. The Boarhunt Parish Council (Hampshire) did the same thing. Compton (Hants.) bought three-quarters of an acre and built a hall; Hessele, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, half an acre for the same purpose. Dysarth (Flintshire) borrowed £88, and West End (Southampton) £450. The Parish Council of Hawkehurst (Kent) borrowed £625 to build its parish hall, which includes offices for the parish business. But a suitable room can be put up for much less. The Parish Council of Trefriew (Carnarvonshire) only had to borrow £114 to pay for its parish room; and the Parish Council of Underskiddaw (Cumberland) only required £150 for the same purpose. The Parish Council of Bovey Tracey (Devonshire) borrowed £400 to provide themselves with a "town hall," but South Stoke (Oxfordshire) was contented with spending £50, and Gunthorpe (Nottinghamshire) with spending £120 on their "parish rooms." At Cheddar (Somerset) the parish council bought a house with a quarter of an acre of garden, and converted it into a public hall and parish offices. This cost about £300, which the parish borrowed for a term of 30 years, during which it will pay interest and sinking fund, and after that will have the house and building free of charge. The Parish Council of Clifton (Lancs., pop. 3,000) bought two cottages for £500, and uses one for the parish offices, while the other is let to a tenant.

### Schools.

Parish councils have no direct authority over the schools, but by means of the school manager whom they elect, or by making representations of their needs to the proper authority, they may add materially to the welfare of the scholars. A school manager appointed by the parish council should be required to give a report to the parish council of what has passed at the education committee. The report would, of course, be confined to such matters as are of public interest and not confidential. Another matter in which a parish council might usefully bestir itself would be to urge the county council to provide facilities for technical education in the

village. The Parish Council of Yarm (Yorkshire) secured for their village the services of an excellent horticultural lecturer from the North Riding County Council as a result of which a very promising horticultural society has been established there.

The Preston-on-Tees Parish Council (Durham, pop. 800) finding that the distance from the homes of many scholars to the existing school was too great to allow of their attending regularly, made representations to the Durham County Council, and a new school was started for the children in the outlying parts of the parish. At Limpsfield (Surrey) the school manager appointed by the parish council personally started a canteen, which fed 60 children who came from a distance at a charge of one penny each per day. The plan has been continued for a second season.

### Charities.

In many parishes the parish council has reformed the charities by appointing some of its own members as trustees. Sometimes, as at Burley-in-Wharfedale (Yorkshire), the rents of parish land or cottages have simply been taken by the overseers in aid of the poor rate (and so helped to pay the rates of the squire, the parson, the innkeeper, etc.!). This was promptly stopped, and the money given to the deserving poor. Then the poor were no longer compelled to come up publicly to claim their doles, but arrangements were made for paying them quietly in their own cottages.

### Sanitation.

It is, properly speaking, the business of the rural district council and the county council to see that every parish is in a proper sanitary condition; that every cottage has a good supply of pure water; that no stinking ponds, foul ditches, or other nuisances pollute the air or water; and that every cottage has decent sanitary conveniences. The parish council can, however, itself attend to small matters. At Marske-by-the-Sea (Yorkshire) the sanitation left much to be desired. An expert, who was called in, prepared an elaborate scheme; but the parish council found it too expensive, and so set themselves to remedy matters by giving a thorough attention to the sewers and sewage outlets, disconnecting of all rain-pipes from the drains, and so on. But, generally speaking, where the parish council comes in is in the power of making complaints to the rural district council, without any man running the risk of displeasing his landlord or his employer. Many parish councils have successfully used this power. They have pestered the rural district council with complaint after complaint, until the nuisances have been done away with. In Hurley (Berks.) the parish council found some of the cottages without any proper water supply, and using an infected source. It complained to the district council, got this source analysed and condemned, and compelled the cottage owners to provide a better supply. Sometimes the parish council has had to appeal to the county council, which has stirred up the district council and made it move. Where the county council has a medical officer (as every county council ought to have), the parish

councils have found it very useful to send him their complaints, and to get him to inspect the parish. If neither the district council nor the county council will help the parish, then the parish council can appeal to the Local Government Board in London. The Parish Councils of Threapwood (Cheshire, pop. 305) and Hildenborough (Kent, pop. 1,407) complained to their district councils time after time about the unhealthy state of their parishes, owing to the bad arrangements for drainage. Finally they appealed to the Local Government Board in London, and the district councils have been told that they must provide proper drainage for these villages. The village of Holcot (Northamptonshire, pop. 343) was always suffering from bad illnesses because there was no drainage. When the parish council complained to the Local Government Board, the district council was ordered to put the village into a sanitary state at once.

In 1905 there was a complaint against the rural district council of Dunmow that the want of a proper water supply in the village of Felstead was injuriously affecting the health of the inhabitants. The Local Government Board directed a local inquiry to be held, and eventually issued an order requiring the district council to carry out their duty within six months. The district council, however, did not comply with the order, and so in August, 1907, a mandamus was obtained from the High Court of Justice to compel them to do so.

In many parishes the parish council has itself dealt with small nuisances, and got them stopped. At Clifton (Beds.) the village suffered from a filthy pond, illegally polluted by drains and itself polluting an open ditch. To put this right meant an expense of £50 or more, and no one could tackle it. When the parish council was established it took up the job, cleaned out the pond, stopped the drainage into it, and scoured the ditches. It cost for one year a special rate of 4½d. in the £, but it improved the health of the village. The Mundesley Parish Council (Norfolk) has hired half an acre of land as a dumping ground for parish refuse. The parish council of Chesterton (Staffordshire) has done well in getting a sewage farm of its own of 140 acres.

### Water Supply.

Although the provision of a new water supply on a large scale is a matter, not for the parish, but for the rural district council, the parish council has power to improve any existing supply within the parish. This power has been exercised in many hundreds of parishes, to the extent of making small but extremely useful improvements. Thus the parish council of Great Stambridge (Essex) found that the village badly needed better water. It obtained as a free gift from the landowner a few square yards of land, on which a well was sunk, a pump and horse-trough erected, and the whole covered by a neat roof. Kilmington (Wilts.) wanted a new parish pump; one pole of freehold land was given free of charge by the owner to the parish council, and a pump erected for the use of the public for ever. At St. Tudy (Cornwall) the parish council had the drinking water

analysed, and, finding it unsatisfactory, got the supply improved and increased. At Gaydon (Warwickshire) the parish council was given a good supply of water, so that it should be for ever maintained in good order for the village. The parish council of Humshaugh (Northumberland) has bought the freehold of a small piece of land, one pole in area, so as to secure for ever a public watering place. The Churchstanton Parish Council (Devon) successfully asserted the public right to certain springs of pure water, and laid down pipes to supply the neighbors. At Thundersley (Essex) there is a good water supply, but the owners of some cottages neglected to lay it on to them. The parish council took the matter up and compelled them to do their duty. But the best work of that parish council was its standing up to a village tyrant. A local landowner filled up and destroyed an ancient spring, which the public had used from time immemorial, and put up barbed wire and tar to prevent the cottagers approaching it, whilst the county policeman was sent round to frighten them. The parish council raised a subscription to fight the case, and by an action in the Court of Queen's Bench (*Reynolds v. Lincoln*) in May, 1899, compelled the landowner to clear out and re-brick the spring, and remove all obstructions to the public use of it. The Ashton Parish Council (Northamptonshire) had an instructive experience. When the churchyard was enlarged, it became necessary to divert an old line of pipes supplying water from a spring to the village well, and the clergyman took upon himself to run the supply to his own house, allowing the village only the overflow from his tank. The parish council (which consisted of a grocer, a gardener, a platelayer, a signalman and a carpenter) then took steps to protect the village, and commenced to put down pipes connecting directly the well with the spring. Thereupon the steward to the local landowner (Duke of Grafton) came down on the parish council, and declared that the pipes, and even the water, belonged to the duke, because it ran under the public high road. At first he tried to stop the work; then he claimed the ownership of the new pipes which the parish council was paying for; at last he offered that the duke should pay the expense, but said he must own the pipes. The parish council stood firm, and said that the parish was determined to possess its own water supply, which they and their forefathers had enjoyed from time immemorial. Finally, the duke, by his steward, made an awful threat. He would appeal to the Government Auditor, and get the amount "surcharged," upon which, as his agent explained, those parish councillors who had ordered the expenditure would have to pay it out of their own pockets. He actually tried to carry out this threat, but his agent fortunately mistook the day, and appeared twenty-four hours too late. So the parish council triumphed, and now enjoys its own good and abundant water supply. This happy result was largely due to the wisdom of the parish council in engaging a good man as clerk. Instead of getting their work done for nothing, and having it done badly, the council pays a salary of £6 a year, and shares with two other parish councils the services of a competent officer.

## Public Lamps and Lighting.

Upwards of a thousand parishes have adopted the Lighting and Watching Acts, which enable the parish council to put up lamps and light the village streets and roads at night. The Parish Council of Elmswell (West Suffolk) is one of those that have done this; that of Menstone (West Riding of Yorkshire) is another (it borrowed £200 to pay for the lamps, and did the thing handsomely). The Parish Council of Treeton (also in the West Riding of Yorkshire) spent £140 on public lighting at starting; and Brampton (Cumberland) borrowed £100 for this purpose, and Seaton Delaval (Northumberland) £138. But usually much smaller sums suffice. The annual expense of lighting is paid for by a separate lighting rate on the parish, which is usually only a half penny or a penny in the pound. The Lighting and Watching Act involves a separate rate and a somewhat cumbrous procedure. Other parishes have asked the Local Government Board to confer on the rural district council the power to light the village; and then got the rural district council to delegate this power to a parochial committee.

## Assessments and the Parish Finances.

Some parish councils, like that of Bradfield St. George (Suffolk, pop. 417) have formally adopted section 3 of the Poor Rate Assessment and Collection Act, 1869, and so made the owners of all cottage property themselves pay the rates. This is found a boon to the poor.

Before the parish council came into existence there was very often no one to see that the churchwardens and overseers did their work fairly as to the assessment of property and the collection of rates. When the parish of Penalt (Monmouthshire) got a parish council, it was discovered that some houses had for years been left out of the assessment, so that the owners of them escaped their share of the rates; and that a large balance was owing to the parish by a former overseer. The parish council insisted on this being made right, and so saved the parish in one year more than the whole amount of its expenditure since that time. At Barford (Warwickshire, pop. 689) the parish council found that the three great houses of the parish were scandalously under-assessed, and got them put up by £200. This at once reduced the rates by a penny in the pound.

At Blackshaw (West Riding of Yorkshire) the parish council thought that the parish was unfairly treated by the county council in being assessed at too high a sum towards the county rate. The parish council twice appealed against the county rate basis, and was successful in getting it considerably reduced, saving the ratepayers of the parish a large sum annually. Similarly, when the neighboring town of Todmorden became a municipal borough, it strove to put upon Blackshaw parish the maintenance of some roads which were in a bad state of repair. The parish council stood up for its rights and got compensation for the parish.

## Markets.

Some parish councils manage little markets or annual fairs, and take the profits in aid of the rates. At Bawtry, in Yorkshire, the parish council rents the market place from the lord of the manor, and receives the market tolls. At Bardney, in Lincolnshire, the parish council maintains the village green and, with the consent of the lord of the manor, lets it out on the occasion of the annual fair, and uses the rents for parish purposes.

## Roads, Paths, and Bridges.

Many parishes have, through their parish councils, got their footpaths and little bridges put in order, and sometimes new ones made. Thus, quite small parishes, such as Welford (Berkshire, pop. 791) have gravelled their footpaths and repaired their footbridges, so that the children can go to school without getting their feet wet. The Parish Council of Snape (Suffolk, pop. 529) finds it convenient to have its own gravel-pit for footpath repair, and so rents a quarter of an acre of land and digs its own gravel instead of buying it. The Parish Council of Orrell-with-Ford (Lancs., pop. 2,104) is properly proud of having "name-plated all the roads, finger-posted all the footpaths, and twice cleaned out the boundary brook." The Parish Council of St. Tudy (Cornwall, pop. 495) agitated for and got built a new footbridge over the river; and the Parish Council of Clifton (Lancs.) has put several footbridges over streams and over the railway. The Parish Council of Weston Turville (Bucks.) took in hand a dangerous corner of a road, and bought a strip of garden to widen the highway. The West Mill Parish Council (Herts.) fenced the road off from a bog with white-painted posts. At Timperley, in Cheshire, there was a footpath leading to a level crossing over the railway. This was a cause of serious danger and occasional accidents. As it proved to be impossible to get a railway bridge, the parish council made an exchange of land and diverted the footpath so as to obviate the dangerous crossing. At Newstead (Nottinghamshire) a new road was needed, and the parish council has rented altogether five acres of land in order to lay this out. Lower Dylais (Glamorgan-shire) wanted a new footpath and made it, formally hiring the narrow strip of land on a long lease. Whitwell (Derbyshire) was in the same case, but was able to hire the strip at a nominal sum. The Parish Council of Blaenpenal (Cardiganshire) made a new cart-way, but was able to buy the freehold of the little bit of land required. At Ockbrook (Derbyshire) the parish council devoted its attention to improving the streets and highways. It adopted the Lighting Act and erected lamps (rate threepence in pound for this), gave names to the roads and streets and put up name-boards, made up and repaired the footways and approaches, and removed nuisances.

## Motor Cars.

Many villages suffer very serious inconvenience and danger from careless and "scorching" motorists. Every parish council should petition the county council, as the Limpsfield Parish Council (Surrey)

has done, through the district council to get the Local Government Board to enforce the limit of ten miles an hour in dangerous parts of the roads. And the county council itself, without the intervention of the Local Government Board, ought to put up sign-posts at all dangerous corners, cross-roads and steep hills.

### Fire Protection.

More than 500 parish councils have taken steps to protect their villages against serious fires. Sometimes, as in the cases of half-a-dozen parishes near Bedford, the councils subscribe towards an efficient fire brigade maintained by a neighboring town. More usually, the parish council organizes a volunteer fire brigade of its own, and provides appliances. At Tempsford (Beds., pop. 434) the parish council pays the engineer's salary; at Burnham (Bucks., pop., 3,245) the men are paid for drills; elsewhere, as at Malpas (Cheshire, pop. 1,139), the men are paid for attendance at fires. At Flimby (Cumberland, pop. 2,482) the members of the parish council themselves act as a fire brigade. Other parishes have borrowed money for fire brigade purposes. Thus Walgrave (Northampton) borrowed £60, Easton (Northampton) £100, and Bishopstone (Wilts) £70 for fire engines, etc.; Dagenham (Essex) £378 for fire extinguishing appliances; and Hornchurch (Essex) £368 for engine house and appliances.

### Railway, Post, and Telegraph Facilities.

Many parish councils have succeeded in getting better service from the Post Office. Thus the Parish Council of Broadhempston (Devon, pop. 445) got a second, or evening, postal delivery; that of Hadley (Salop) got several additional pillar boxes and an afternoon postal delivery; that of Churchstanton (Somerset, pop. 581) obtained a money order office; those of East Claydon (Bucks.) and Elwick (Durham) have given a guarantee against loss and so secured a telegraph office. Newick (Sussex, pop. 953) and Eaglescliffe and Preston-on-Tees (Durham) got better train services from the railway companies; St. Bride's Major (Glamorgan, pop. 686) made the company put up bridges and stiles; while the Parish Council of Clifton (Lancashire) got the railway company to replace a level crossing by a footbridge.

### Libraries and Reading Rooms.

In many villages a reading room is now maintained by the generosity of the clergyman or the squire. Often these are just what the village desires, but sometimes they are not. In one parish reading room in Surrey no Liberal or Radical newspaper is allowed. In one Sussex parish the clergyman gave his copy of the *Times*, but refused to let the *Daily News* be presented, on the ground that it was a "party organ"! But in a few parishes the parish council now maintains a free public library and reading room, where the inhabitants can read just what books and newspapers they please, without being beholden to anyone. At Corwen (Merionethshire, pop. 2,723) the library was opened in 1896; it has a newsroom open 78 hours a

week, and 250 books ; it pays its librarian nine pounds a year ; costs altogether £80 a year ; and is managed by a committee of six parish councillors and six others, whom the parish council co-opts. Halkyn (Flint., pop. 1,389) opened its library in 1898 ; already has 700 books and a newsroom open 72 hours a week ; pays its librarian £25 a year ; and co-opts four persons to serve with five parish councillors as its library committee, which has an income of £63. Sometimes, as at Colwall (Hereford, pop. 1,892), the parish council gets a library building provided by private endowment. What can be done by a tiny village is shown at East and Botolph Claydon (Bucks., pop. 336) where a library was opened by the parish council in 1897, which now contains over 600 books. The squire has built and placed at the disposal of the council, at a nominal rent, a parish hall, reading room, library, and caretaker's rooms. The library work is done gratuitously by a lady, who attends every Saturday afternoon. In the neighboring parishes of Middle Claydon, Grandborough, and Water Eaton (Bucks., pop. of each between 200 and 300), a joint library is maintained by the three parish councils, largely through the help of Sir Edmund Verney, whose daughter gives her services as librarian. It is open 18 hours a week, and contains over 2,300 volumes, with a printed catalogue. The management is by a committee of five parish councillors ; and the total cost is about £18 a year, of which only £10 comes from the rates. In all these cases the parish council levies the full library rate of one penny in the pound, and ekes this out with such receipts as sales of old newspapers, fines, and subscriptions.

### Bathing Places.

A score of parishes have adopted the Baths and Washhouses Acts, and now provide swimming baths. Sometimes, as at Betchworth (Surrey, pop. 1,789) and Alveston (Warwick) the parish council has merely put up sheds, screens and platforms, so as to enable the river to be used in comfort, and made regulations, confirmed by the Local Government Board, as to the times for women and men respectively. At Ibstock (Leicester, pop. 3,922) the parish council built a bathing tank 6ft. deep, with corrugated iron fences ; costing £90 ; supplied with water from the brook ; and looked after by an old man at 7/6 a week. A penny is charged for admission, or two shillings for a season ticket. But the most successful bath seems to be that at Snitterfield (Warwick, pop. 727). Here an old brick tank, 70ft. by 30ft., that had been long unused, was obtained by the parish council on lease from Lady Trevelyan at a nominal rental. The council spent £40 in putting it in order, fencing it round with tarred matchboarding, and providing a comfortable dressing-room and diving-pier. The water is supplied by a spring and is constantly changed. The bath is open free five days a week, certain hours being set apart for women and girls. One hour a week may be reserved on the sixth day by season ticket holders paying a small subscription. The nearest cottager and his wife act as caretakers for 30s. a year, and the total annual cost is only about £5. The vicar has gratuitously taught the boys to swim. He offered to teach the girls if the

parish council would provide bathing dresses for them, but the council (consisting of a "gentleman," a doctor, a farmer, and two hurdlers) declined to do so (though bathing dresses are provided out of the rates in London baths). During the summer 30 or 40 persons use the tank daily. Many children bathe regularly every noon; and the bath is highly appreciated by the parish. Swimming baths have also been established by the parish councils of Snodland (Kent, pop. 4,136), Shere (Surrey, pop. 2,184); and Blaby parish council (Leicestershire, pop. 1,842) hires a few square yards of land for a bathing station.

It is to be regretted that so few parishes have yet followed these examples. The whole capital cost of a good open-air bath need not be incurred at once. The bath may be made one year, cemented the next, enclosed the next, and so on. The annual cost of maintenance need only be trifling.

No parish council seems yet to have provided hot-water baths for individual use, though these would be a great boon to every mining village. Nor has any parish council had the enterprise to provide a laundry for public use, in spite of the great success in London and elsewhere of this convenience to small households.

### Some Typical Parishes.

The following account of the work of the parish council in four separate parishes in different parts of England, shows what has actually been done.

#### KINGSTEIGNTON (DEVONSHIRE).

Population in 1901, 1,942. Area, 3,975 acres. Number of parochial electors, 370.  
Rateable value, £14,280.

This parish has throughout taken considerable interest in its parish council elections. The council has had from the first a Liberal majority, about evenly divided between Church and Dissent; but the elections have turned more on "village politics" and personal preferences, than on Imperial politics or religion. The council (13) now consists of one clergyman, three farmers, two schoolmasters, two builders, one mine-owner, one shopkeeper, and three wage-earners. The council has appointed trustees of the charities, and set on foot inquiries about them which have done good; it has regularized the assessments; it has preserved one footpath from a threatened encroachment; it obtained the tithe-map from the vicar and transferred it to its own custody; it hired two fields, comprising five-and-a-quarter acres, and let them out in 33 allotments; it moved the district council to provide a new water supply for the parish at a cost of £2,000, and built a new reservoir capable of holding 85,000 gallons and costing £1,800, which (though hotly opposed) is now appreciated and used by nearly all the parish; it has organized a parish fire brigade, providing £50 worth of fire-hose and other appliances; it has obtained from the district council its own appointment as a parochial committee for sanitary purposes, and has got nuisances stopped; it has cleaned out the village leet (or water course) which was in a dangerous state; it has repeatedly moved the district council

to improve the drainage, obtaining more frequent flushing of sewers and good ventilating shafts, and causing steps to be taken to prevent floodings and storm damage. It owns three houses, bringing in a small sum towards the expenses, which are rigorously kept down. It has a division under the Newton Abbot Corps of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, with full uniform and equipment for dealing with accidents and removal to hospital. It has taken gas from Newton Abbot for street lighting purposes, and is without doubt the best lit village in the country.

#### AYLESFORD (KENT).

Population in 1901, 2,678. Area, 4,057 acres. Number of parochial electors, about 550. Rateable value, about £15,981.

In this parish (which includes two villages, one old and proprietary, the other modern and manufacturing) there has never been any active fighting in the elections; and though the meetings have been well attended, they have lately not been seriously contested. The parish council has always been elected by show of hands without a poll, and only once has any old member been rejected. The council (12) now consists of a sand merchant, a manager and assistant manager of a cement works, two doctors, two grocers, the cashier and secretary of a brickworks, a lime merchant, a farmer, and an engineer; mostly Conservative in politics; partly Church, partly Dissent. The council has done useful work with regard to the charities, putting representatives on the board of some important almshouses. It has stopped at least one job, by which it was proposed to reduce to a nominal sum the rent paid for a way-leave. The council appealed to the Charity Commissioners against it, and got a substantial rent fixed. It has encouraged revision of the assessments, and got raised those (especially of licensed houses) that were too low. It has prevented unwarranted diversions of public footpaths, even when desired by the dominant landowner. It has increased an already considerable supply of allotments by hiring three and a half acres, let to 40 tenants. It has obtained two recreation grounds, one of three and one of nine acres. It negotiated with a neighboring water company, and got considerably better terms of supply. It has provided fire hydrants. It has greatly improved and extended the lighting of the village by gas lamps. It helps the county council to provide the parish with technical classes every winter. It has an excellent sewage arrangement, which cost nearly £20,000. The expenditure (other than that for lighting) is covered every year by a penny rate, except in the year that the recreation grounds were laid out, when it amounted to threepence in the pound.

#### HORSFORD (NORFOLK), ST. FAITH'S UNION.

Population in 1901, 691. Area, 4,249 acres. Number of parochial electors, 151. Rateable value £2,560.

This is a good sample of a purely rural parish, where the parish council, though not brilliantly successful, has been of real advantage. The first election (1894) excited great interest, and there was a fierce

contest and a poll. An active Radical majority was elected, which got some things done, but found more difficulties than it expected. The next three elections were decided by show of hands, and Conservative majorities were elected. Later on, in the same way, eight Liberals and one Conservative were elected, and these have gone steadily to work in a quieter way than the first council. The councillors long included four tenant farmers, three farm laborers, one brickfield laborer, and one agent (a townsman). The council, since 1894, has secured a useful footpath against possible diversion; hired eight acres of land for allotments; got the county council to hold a public inquiry into the overcrowded state of the village and need for more cottages—the inquiry attracted so much attention that the worst evils got remedied—obtained a letter-box where needed from the Post Office, and got a savings bank branch opened in the parish, by guaranteeing the cost; stirred up the district council about a wet and dirty lane which had never been repaired within living memory—this caused the landowners to remedy their neglect. Perhaps the most striking result has been the care of the parish land. These 208 acres of heath had been neglected for years, and the neighboring landowners and occupiers were quietly establishing a right of way across it. The parish council elected trustees to manage this charity, and these fenced in its land from the road, enclosed and drained eight acres, which are now let for grazing; and, after a hot discussion with the squire, maintained its fence against his claim to a right of way. The district council now owns and lets the shooting on the watering pits, gravel pits, and other odds and ends of land belonging to the parish under an Enclosure Award of 1810; and the rent is credited to the parish for the maintenance of roads. When land is wanted for allotments, the landowners are quite willing to let it to the parish council. But the real value of the parish council here is much more its intangible results on the village life and character. All classes are brought together to discuss their common business, and the laborers have been taught to look the squire and the parson in the face, and to realize that the best men of their own class make as good and trustworthy councillors as landlords and farmers. "Everyone," it is now said, "has become independent." They know that any real grievance in the village can now be remedied, and the council serves as a vent-hole for complaints and suspicions that would otherwise have smouldered dangerously for years.

#### NEWICK (SUSSEX).

Population in 1901, 953. Area, 1,977 acres. Number of parochial electors, 200.  
Rateable value, £4,876.

One grave defect of the parish council, as it is usually administered, is its failure to attract any public interest. It is not enough to put up a notice on the church door. It is better to do as the Parish Council of Orrell-with-Ford (Lancs., pop. 2,104) has done, viz., to meet regularly every six weeks on fixed dates. The lack of public interest is partly due to the neglect of the councils to let the parish know what they are doing. An admirable example to the

contrary is seen at Newick (Sussex), where the parish council presents an annual report, which is printed in the local newspaper. As the report for 1899-1900 gives a vision of the work of an active parish council, it is here printed in full.

**ALLOTMENTS.**—The committee have now a prospect of securing land and having nearly completed their proposals, the council hope shortly to have before them a definite and complete scheme.

**BOOKS OF REFERENCE.**—Copies of further Acts of Parliament have been added.

**BUILDING BYE-LAWS.**—In view of the continued construction of insanitary dwellings in the parish, the council have urged on the authorities the necessity of enacting building bye-laws for this district. The response has not been favorable, but, looking at the importance of this question, the council will probably feel it their duty to press it further.

**CHARITIES.**—The council having inquired as to the existence of any parochial charities, have received from the Commissioners an opinion that there are none, but further inquiries remain to be made.

**DISTRICT ROADS.**—The council, having persevered in their former course, find that there has been some improvement. They have also obtained from the highway authority an undertaking to repair the Rough, which has, however, not yet been acted on. The council have resolved not to apply for powers over the district roads under section 15 Local Government Act, 1894, but unless such roads are better managed in future to seek to obtain the transference of such management to the county council under section 16 of the above Act, or otherwise.

**EDUCATION.**—Two classes for women and girls under the county council have been carried out by Mrs. Gravely with satisfactory results. It remains to arrange technical or other classes for men and boys, and the organizing secretary (Mr. Young) has consented to address a public meeting shortly to that end.

**FINANCE.**—Considerable progress has been made. All payments under the authority of the council, whether of accounts or of extra remuneration to officials, have been systematically examined by the finance committee, who have also ascertained the causes of the rise in the poor rate in May, 1898. They have also established the right of ratepayers to examine the district council minute book. The drainage committee have partly explained the heavy special drainage rate and will further report thereon.

**FIRE BRIGADE.**—An ineffectual communication was made to the Bonfire Boys' Society. It remains to decide whether to repeat that communication next year or what other attempt to make, if any. Inquiries should be made of those parishes who have already successfully completed their arrangements.

**FOOTPATHS.**—The committee have collected much information as to the history of the more important footpaths with a view to determining the liability for their repair. They are waiting legal advice as to preserving the testimony they have collected. Meanwhile no further expense has been incurred.

**ISOLATION HOSPITAL.**—The council have supported an application to the authorities for an isolation hospital for the district, which is likely to be acted on.

**PARISH DOCUMENTS.**—The committee was re-appointed but have been unable to proceed for want of the required directions from the county council, whose attention will probably have to be recalled to the subject.

**POSTAL FACILITIES.**—The council have secured from the General Post Office the promise of a new pillar-box at Cornwell's Bank for outgoing letters. An application for the despatch on Sundays of letters posted at the railway station was not granted.

**REPRESENTATION ON DISTRICT COUNCIL AND BOARD OF GUARDIANS.**—The memorial presented by the council in 1898 has resulted, not in an increased representation for Newick, but in a proportionate increase in rural representation on the board of guardians at the expense of urban.

**SEWAGE.**—The committee appointed by the council have devoted much attention to this subject, and have furnished the council with considerable information. There has been some alteration in the methods of the sanitary authority in providing super-

vision and in cultivating the irrigation area. It remains to ascertain how far the present methods are adequate for the improvement of the drains or the relief of the ratepayers.

**STEAM ENGINES ON HIGHWAYS.**—The county council have acted on the suggestion of the parish council for the publication of the conditions under which steam traffic on highways is permitted. The issue of the new regulations of the county council is now awaited.

**TRAIN SERVICE.**—Among other railway business transacted the council, having been informed by the railway company that the late train run the previous winter between Lewes and Newick had been worked at a loss, requested the company to extend the train to East Grinstead, a request in which they were supported by the councils of East Grinstead, West Hoathley, Horsted Keynes and Danehill. The company, however, preferred to run the same train as before, but on Saturdays, an experiment which seems to have paid better. The council also obtained through the Brighton United Football Club a reduction of fares in connection with the Saturday train. Further information is likely to be furnished by the company shortly.

**VOLUNTEER EQUIPMENT FUND.**—At the instance of the Lord Lieutenant the parish council undertook to support and collect for this fund, and have arranged for the sum of £14 9s. 6d. to be sent to the treasurer.

**VILLAGE GREEN.**—Some progress has been made in pursuing the necessary inquiries, but some time must elapse before the council assume effective control, because the legal difficulties are exceptionally technical and intricate.

**WATER SUPPLY.**—The last-named consideration applies to the water supply, so far as it is connected with the Green.—*East Sussex News*, 13th April, 1900.

### The Parish Meeting.

In those parishes which are too small to have a parish council, there is always a parish meeting, which has nearly the same powers as a parish council. It was intended that all the house or cottage occupiers and other electors in these small parishes should meet now and then in the evening to discuss the parish affairs and decide what ought to be done. They could appoint committees for special purposes, and get new powers conferred on them by the county council. This seems to have been a failure in most places. The parish meeting has been held as a matter of form, to elect a chairman and two or more overseers. But in very few villages have the laborers, or the other electors, had any real discussion on the parish affairs. Very few parish meetings have obtained allotments or grazing land, recreation or burial grounds; hardly any have done anything about the charities, or looked after the footpaths, or improved the water supply. In over 5,000 parishes in England and Wales, where no parish council exists, nothing at all has been done by the people themselves. During the year 1906-7, out of 5,724 parishes without parish councils, only in 385 did the parish meeting spend anything at all.

But a few of these little parishes have done something. Some of them have applied to the county council and obtained the privilege of having a parish council. This should be done by every one of them. A few have asked the county council to group them with neighboring parishes, and so share in their councils.

In a few cases the parish meeting has itself managed the parish affairs, as it was intended to do. Thus the parish meeting of Kempley (Gloucestershire, pop. 210) has hired five and a half acres of land for allotments, which it lets out to seven tenants. At

Barney (Norfolk) the parish meeting managed to get four and a quarter acres for this purpose, which is now let to 15 tenants. So in East Worldham (Hampshire, pop. 272) the parish meeting hires and manages four and a quarter acres, let to 13 tenants; and at Walberswick (East Suffolk, pop. 304) the parish meeting has five acres, let to 12 tenants. In one case, that of Clapton (Gloucestershire, pop. 103), the parish meeting, finding itself unable to get allotments in any other way, applied to its county council and got an order compelling the landowner to let it some land.

Some of these tiny parishes have improved their burial grounds. The parish meeting of Little Hale (Lincolnshire, pop. 270) laid out £92 in providing additional burial accommodation, and borrowed the money on a thirty years term. The parish meeting of South Newbald (East Riding of Yorkshire, pop. 166) borrowed and spent £150 in this way; and those of Wilshop (West Riding of Yorkshire), Gauthrop (North Riding of Yorkshire), North Redditch (Worcester), £68, £40, and £70 respectively.

### How Parishes can get Greater Freedom and More Powers.

Nearly everywhere we find the complaint that the parish council has not got enough power. Many things it cannot do at all, such as manage the village school, though it appoints one of the six managers. Many other things it can do only by getting the consent of the rural district council, a body usually made up of farmers, who often object to do anything, however useful it may be, that costs money. But parish councils have actually got many abuses remedied by writing to the rural district council, and this should always be tried. Sometimes (as, for instance, getting compulsory power to hire or purchase land) the parish council has to go to the county council, which is a long way off, and not very willing to listen to a small parish. The law ought to be changed.

But even under the present law there are ways and means by which a parish can get more power and freedom to manage its own affairs. Many parishes have done so in the following ways:—

#### I.—THE PAROCHIAL COMMITTEE.

The parish council may ask the rural district council to appoint a "parochial committee," and to make the parish council that committee, with, perhaps, the addition of the district councillor for that district. Then the parish council (besides all its own powers) may exercise within its own parish nearly all the powers that the rural district council possesses, if they are delegated to the parish committee. The expenses for sewage and water supply will be kept separate, and will be charged on the parish in the poor rate; but for other matters they will be shared over the whole district, just as if there had been no parochial committee, unless the Local Government Board confers powers specially for one parish. Thus the Croydon Rural District Council (Surrey) every year appoints parochial committees for five of its parishes, consisting in each case of the members of the parish council, together with the rural district

councillors elected by the parish. These parochial committees, meeting in the parishes themselves, practically carry on the government, giving their orders direct to the rural district officials, and making formal reports to the rural district council, which are usually confirmed. The Liskeard Rural District Council (Cornwall) has followed the same plan with regard to all the parishes within its district. Another example is seen in Derbyshire, where the Parish Council of Ockbrook (pop. 2,567) got itself appointed the parochial committee for the parish. Some of the best governed parishes in the Bromley Rural District (Kent) are managed by parish councils acting as parochial committees.

## II.—THE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

The parish council may apply to the county council to have the parish declared an urban district. The county council will send one or two of its members to hold a public inquiry in the parish, and if it is clear that the bulk of the people wish it, and if the parish is not too small, the county council will probably do what is desired. Then the parish elects an urban district council instead of a parish council, and gets quite free from any control by the rural district council. It can then build cottages, provide sewers and water supply, and manage the roads. It can go in for improving the parish in almost any way it chooses; but, of course, the parish will have to pay the cost in rates. An urban district council has practically the same powers as the town council of a small municipal borough. There are no aldermen, and the chairman is not called a mayor. But he is, during his year of office, a justice of the peace for the county; he can sit as a magistrate at petty sessions, and attend the general quarter sessions. There are many of these so called "urban districts" with fewer than 2,000 population, and quite rural in character. On the other hand, there are a score or two of parishes with between 5,000 and 15,000 population, which are apparently still contented to be under parish councils, and thus subject to the rural district council. There are some hundreds of parishes having more than 2,000 inhabitants in the same case. Every parish with a population of 2,000 or upwards ought to apply to the county council to be made into an "urban district," and so set free from the control of the rural district council. During the last 10 years a great many parishes, some of them quite small, have thus obtained self-government.

## Conclusion.

The lesson of all this is that "where there's a will there's a way." If there is anything wrong in a parish, the parish council can do a great deal towards putting it right, *if only the right men are chosen*. If anyone wishes for further information on the subject, he should write to the Secretary of the FABIAN SOCIETY, 3 Clement's Inn, Strand, London, W.C.

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